

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Host of America Motel

Other names/site number: Star of America

Name of related multiple property listing:  
\_\_\_\_\_

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

## 2. Location

Street & number: 3245 Rivers Avenue

City or town: North Charleston State: SC County: Charleston

Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination    request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets    does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

   national    statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A    B X C    D

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

Host of America Motel  
Name of Property

Charleston Co., SC  
County and State

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title :

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency/bureau  
or Tribal Government

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- \_\_\_ entered in the National Register  
\_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register  
\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register  
\_\_\_ removed from the National Register  
\_\_\_ other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:

Public – Local ☐

Public – State ☐

Public – Federal ☐

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
District	<input type="checkbox"/>
Site	<input type="checkbox"/>
Structure	<input type="checkbox"/>
Object	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>          </u>	buildings
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	sites
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	structures
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>          </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register           

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/motel  
COMMERCE/restaurant

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

    Vacant      
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

    Modern Movement      
    Neoclassical Revival      
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: WOOD, BRICK, STUCCO

Foundation: steel infrastructure

Walls: wood with brick veneer

Roof: synthetic (membrane)

Other: metal, concrete

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The Host of America Motel is a two-story, modular "motor inn" constructed in 1961 on the west side of Rivers Avenue in North Charleston, SC. The motel complex is comprised of three contributing resources: the Main Motel Building, a rectangular, two-story structure that runs parallel with the southern property line, contains twenty-two motel units on each floor, and houses a check-in foyer, restaurant and cocktail lounge; the Motel Annex, a rectangular, two-story, structure situated in the northeast corner of the property along Rivers Avenue and contains ten motel units; and the property's original tile pool, situated parallel to Rivers Avenue between the Motel Annex and the Main Motel Building and has since been filled in. The Host of America

Motel is architecturally significant as a well-preserved 1960s motel in North Charleston, representative of the area's midcentury commercial development and rise of the motel industry. It is also significant for its unique method of modular construction, as it was the first prefabricated motel to come fully furnished in Charleston County, and possibly the state and nation. In addition to its preserved original footprint, floor plan and modular infrastructure, the motel's character-defining elements include the façade's 1966 full-height protruding portico, central entry with flanking sidelights and transom tracery, and 8/8 wooden sash windows, as well as all 1961 geometric metal railings, decorative concrete block screen walls, check-in carport, aluminum storefront windows and transoms, and interior finishes within the Main Motel Building's lounge and restaurant. The most substantial alteration to the motel was a 1966 addition, which contributes to the motel's overall significance both historically and architecturally. Late twentieth and early twenty-first century changes include the replacement of original window glass and motel doors and the loss of six units at the rear (east) end from a fire, all of which do not substantially detract from the motel's 1960s character.

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### **Narrative Description**

The Host of America Motel is a fifty-four-room motor inn built in 1961 of timber and steel modular construction. The rectangular property is situated on the west side of Rivers Avenue in North Charleston, SC, and is one mile west of the Charleston Naval Base. It is located in a historically commercial section of North Charleston that has experienced gradual economic decline since the 1990s. The motel complex features a central entry drive that extends the length of the property from Rivers Avenue. The drive is flanked by two 1961 midcentury modern structures, one of which is fronted by a 1966 Neoclassical Revival façade. One of America's first two-story modular motels, the Host of America Motel was designed by Charlotte-based architect Edward K. Sheppard, and the units were constructed by modular house manufacturer Knox Homes Corporation.<sup>1</sup> The motel complex is one of the few surviving motels representative of North Charleston's post World War II commercial development and stands as the best representative example of modular motel construction in the city.

### **Main Motel Building (1961, 1966) – Contributing Building**

The approximately 21,357 square-foot, two-story Main Motel Building is situated perpendicular to Rivers Avenue along the south property line and features a single line of twenty-two motel units on each floor. The row of motel units is capped with a flat membrane roof and is clad in aluminum siding on the south elevation, where most of the utilities are housed. At the north elevation, the building contains a full-width open corridor on each floor supported by square, stucco brick columns. The corridors are lined with original metal railings with a geometric design and feature equidistant, full-height decorative concrete block screen walls. Open-air, turned stair halls, also lined with original railings, are positioned at the center and both ends of the corridors.

Each motel unit was assembled as a separate timber-framed box in the Knox Homes Corporation plant in Thomson, GA before being inserted into a large steel infrastructure on site. Today, the timber and steel infrastructure remain intact. Each motel unit has also retained its offset entry with paired, full-height storefront windows set in low-profile, aluminum frames. Although the

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<sup>1</sup> "Instant Motel' is Taking Shape on Rivers Ave in North Area," 8 April 1961, News & Courier, Charleston, SC.

1961 interior finishes have been removed from some units, especially in the Motel Annex, all units have retained the original storefront configuration and aluminum frames. Most units also maintain original floor plans and contain original headboards, exterior doors and hardware. Most window glass was replaced after Hurricane Hugo in 1989.

The Main Motel Building is fronted at the primary (east) elevation by a two-story, three-bay wide Registration Wing, which originally contained a downstairs check-in foyer with rear offices and two upstairs motel units. Original to the 1961 motel design, however, is the check-in foyer, accessed through a full-height, full-width aluminum storefront beneath a single-bay carport at the wing's northwest corner. The carport, also part of the 1961 original design, is supported by thick, square stucco brick columns. The carport is capped with a late-twentieth century side-gable enclosure, which contains a storage room accessed by a central door at the gable's north elevation.

The Registration Wing is capped with a low-pitch, front-gabled asphalt roof and has a 1966 Neoclassical Revival addition on the primary (east) elevation. The addition originally contained the Pilgrim House Restaurant downstairs and the Burgundy Lounge upstairs. With the exception of the south wall, which reveals the original running-bond brick veneer, the Registration Wing is finished in stucco. The 1966 addition contains a full-height portico at the facade supported by thin, square metal columns on brick piers. The gable is clad in vinyl. Beneath the portico, the Registration Wing contains a central entry with a transom and sidelights comprised of tracery, as well as flanking fenestration of 8/8 wooden sash. At the second story, it contains a central, faux door fronted by an iron balcony. The restaurant and lounge are internally accessed by an aluminum-framed glass door along the check-in foyer's interior east wall. The Pilgrim House Restaurant contains an open floor plan with an enclosed kitchen situated at its southwest corner. All original interior finishes survive within the restaurant, including the shag carpet, pine paneling and booths as well as the kitchen's floor tile and brick-veneered walls.

At the Registration Wing's second floor, hotel rooms occupy the space above the check-in foyer and rear offices, while the Pilgrim House Restaurant is topped by the Burgundy Lounge and accompanying restrooms. The lounge is only accessed by a turned stair hall lined in pine paneling at the Pilgrim House Restaurant's southeast corner. The Burgundy Lounge also contains original 1966 carpeting and pine paneling, as well as the 1966 plaster medallion, ceiling design, bar and fixtures. The two, adjacent motel units are not accessible through the lounge, but rather through the stair hall that connects the Registration Wing and the rest of the Main Motel Building.

#### Motel Annex (1961) – Contributing Building

Directly adjacent to the Registration Wing is the 3,825 square-foot, two-story Motel Annex, situated along the north property line and separated from the rest of the property by the central drive. With the exception of the north wall, which reveals the original running-bond brick veneer, the Motel Annex is finished in stucco. It is comprised of five rooms on each floor and is identical in configuration and architectural style to the Main Motel Building. A stair hall is located at the eastern end of the structure and is obscured by a full-height, decorative concrete block screen wall. The interiors of all motel units in the Motel Annex have been either gutted or significantly damaged due to water damage.

Directly south of the Motel Annex is the property's original tile pool. Infilled after Hurricane Hugo in 1989, the pool is rectangular in size with curved edges and is surrounded by concrete slab on all sides. Visible along the pool's edge is the original square tile lining. The pool area, slightly elevated, is enclosed at the street (east) by a full-height concrete-block wall, a partial-height wall on the south and an iron fence with equidistant brick piers on the north. Entry into the pool area can be accessed through the Motel Annex or from the central drive through a curved stair and iron gate at the pool's southwest corner.

### Integrity

After Hurricane Hugo in 1989, changes made to the motel included the replacement of select doors and storefront glass, the portico's wooden columns with metal supports, the recladding of the facade's pediment in vinyl, the relocation of the interior registration desk from the south wall to the west wall and the enclosure of the storefronts' bottom panel of glass to accommodate HVAC systems. The original aluminum fenestration framing throughout the entire complex, however, survives. Most of the exterior brick veneer, laid in the running bond, was stuccoed.

Overall, the modern alterations do not significantly compromise the motel's historic integrity. Original midcentury elements continue to define the structures on both the interior and exterior, and the overall character of the motel complex has changed little since its construction. The addition of a Neoclassical Revival extension of the primary façade, the most substantial alteration, contributes to the building's significance. The Burgundy Lounge and Pilgrim House Restaurant, both intact in their original form and design, were significant elements to the motel's success in the 1960s and represent North Charleston's commercial development of the post-World War II period. The addition is also representative of typical motel design at this time, as most motels throughout the nation utilized regional architectural styles and materials as inspiration in the overall aesthetic. The Neoclassical Revival addition pays homage to the area's colonial and antebellum history, as well as Charleston County's architectural heritage.

Host of America Motel  
Name of Property

Charleston Co., SC  
County and State

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

ARCHITECTURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1961 – 1970

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1961

1966

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Edward K. Sheppard

Knox Homes Corporation

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Host of America Motel is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under Criterion A as a well-preserved, midcentury motel in North Charleston. It is the first prefabricated motel in the area and is a symbol of the area's postwar commercial development. It is also eligible under Criterion C as an exceptional and early example of a pre-furnished, modular motel, a unique method of construction at this time. Built in 1961 with a front (east) addition constructed in 1966, the two-story modular motel was described by the *News & Courier* in 1961 as "the first of its kind in the nation," comprised of stackable, pre-built and fully-furnished units made on an assembly line in Thomson, GA. This type of construction would ultimately be hailed as internationally innovative with the construction of Habitat 67, a prefabricated and fully-furnished motel comprised of stackable concrete units introduced in the 1967 International and Universal Exposition, a World's Fair in Montreal, Canada. Today, the motel's infrastructure and original midcentury design remain intact with minimal alteration. The largest addition to the structure occurred in 1966 with the construction of a Neoclassical Revival façade to house a restaurant and cocktail lounge, both significant to the motel's commercial and social role in midcentury North Charleston. The addition's Neoclassical Revival design is also representative of midcentury roadside design at this time in its use of regional architectural styles and materials as inspiration for the overall aesthetic.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

**Criterion A: Entertainment/Recreation**

*The "Instant Motel"*

The Host of America Motel is significant for its associations with postwar development in North Charleston, SC. The motel was completed in October of 1961 as a sixty-room "motor inn" by owner Robert W. Rogers on property formerly occupied by Rogers' car dealership. Opened in 1945 as Victory Auto Sales and known locally for its animated neon sign portraying Donald Duck driving a Studebaker, the dealership was later remembered by the *News & Courier* as "one of the few used car dealers in the rapidly growing North Area" during the post-World War II period (Figure 1).<sup>2</sup> By the late 1950s, however, the business was negatively impacted by new nationwide regulations on used automotive sales.<sup>3</sup> Rogers was encouraged by family friends who worked in Florida's hospitality industry to optimize the property's value by using it to cater to the growing number of travelers along Rivers Avenue associated with the nearby Charleston Naval Base. By 1961, Rogers formally closed the dealership to begin the property's transition from an auto lot to a modern motel complex, a new type of roadside amenity that was emerging along America's most-traveled highways.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> "Auto Sales and Service is Major Local Industry," 1979 July 10, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>3</sup> In person interview with Robert W. Rogers, Jr., interview by author, 2019 August 12.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

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Established in the early twentieth century approximately one mile east of the Host of America Motel and operating as one of the most significant United States Navy facilities along the eastern seaboard during World War II, the Charleston Naval Base and associated shipyard continued to operate and flourish in the postwar period, attracting government contractors, traveling salesmen and military families to the area long after the war ended. From 1950 to 1953, the base employed over 9,000 workers, who manufactured and repaired submarines during the Korean War. Naval base workers continued to outfit submarines with nuclear power and missiles, as well as repair both government and local ships, from the mid 1950s through the 1980s.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the Mine Base and Naval Receiving Station was integrated into the Charleston Naval Base by 1960, increasing the area's military personnel from 13,500 in 1960 to 21,500 by 1966.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to the increased activity at the naval base, the area's commercial development was fueled by highway development and improvement. A 2001 article in the *North Charleston News* deemed the "North Area's love affair with the motorcar" as a stimulus for the midcentury commercial growth along the main thoroughfares in North Charleston (North Charleston was known as the North Area neighborhood in an unincorporated section of Charleston County before the city's establishment in 1972).<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the 1995 "City of North Charleston: Historical and Architectural Survey" credited the area's midcentury highway improvements as the impetus for the augmented roadside development of the late 1950s and early 1960s.<sup>8</sup> One of the area's most traveled thoroughfares during this time was Rivers Avenue.

First laid out in 1935 as "North Charleston Boulevard" and given its present name to honor U.S. Representative L. Mendel Rivers in 1948, Rivers Avenue was originally intended to give downtown Charleston "one of the safest" and "one of the most beautiful highway approaches in the state."<sup>9</sup> With new "dual highway lane" frontage providing both a direct route to downtown Charleston and access to the Charleston Naval Base, Rivers Avenue provided an efficient and fruitful setting for a commercial strip that catered to motorists.<sup>10</sup>

"Tourist camps" or "tourist courts," complexes that typically consisted of a series of individual cabins or small stand-alone structures, began to line Rivers Avenue at its establishment in the pre-war period, and included Cottage Court Tourist Camp, Hickory Grove Tourist Camp, J&H Tourist Camp, and Marion Camp, none of which survive today.<sup>11</sup> By 1961, however, "motor inns", "motor courts," or motels, structures of multiple rooms under a single-roof, emerged along

<sup>5</sup> New South Associates, "To Meet a Great Need: Building NH68 at the Charleston Naval Hospital," unpublished report, 2009 December. 13.

<sup>6</sup> Fraser, Walter J. Jr., *Charleston! Charleston!*, Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989. 418; Coletta, Poala E., ed., *United States Navy and Marine Corps Bases, Domestic*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985. 91-103.

<sup>7</sup> "Era of Diners, Garages and Motor Courts," 2001 February 1, *North Charleston News*, North Charleston, SC.

<sup>8</sup> Preservation Consultants, Inc. "City of North Charleston: Historical and Architectural Survey," 1995, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, SC. 9.

<sup>9</sup> "The North Charleston Boulevard," 1935 October 1, *Evening Post*, Charleston, SC; "To Honor Rivers," 1948 February 13, *State*, Columbia, SC.

<sup>10</sup> "To Honor Rivers," 1948 February 13, *State*, Columbia, SC.

<sup>11</sup> Charleston City Directory, 1940, South Carolina Room, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, SC

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the roadway as a direct result of both America's increasing number of family-owned automobiles and the Charleston area's growing hospitality industry. This included the c. 1961, 74-unit Catalina Motel, a single-story, U-shaped complex that survives today as housing for veterans but has lost most of its midcentury architectural details, the c. 1959 Siesta Motel, a two-story, U-shaped complex that retains its original, rusticated-stone veneer, but has little midcentury detailing remaining, and the now-demolished c. 1950 Bon Aire Motel. The Host of America Motel became the fourth motel constructed along Rivers Avenue. It was the first, however, to utilize modular construction.

In February of 1961, Victory Auto Sales advertised a "going-out-of-business" sale due to its replacement by a "new huge motor hotel."<sup>12</sup> Two months later, the *News & Courier* announced the construction of an "instant motel" on the property "occurring right before the eyes of Rivers Ave motorists," calling it a "phenomenon" and an "experimental job" (Figure 2).<sup>13</sup> The construction of the structure's metal infrastructure, described as a "chest of drawers of steel," began on site under the supervision of Charlotte-based architect Edward K. Sheppard while sixty motel units were produced, assembled, and furnished as individual "building blocks" by Knox Homes Corporation in their plant in Thomson, Georgia. With the construction process beginning on March 1, 1961 and the first motel guests welcomed on June 25, 1961, the Host of America Motel was completed in approximately 16 weeks, a typical timeline for most modular motels at this time.<sup>14</sup>

Like many other property owners around the country, the idea of "an instant motel" was desirable to Rogers, as it was a quick way to utilize his already-owned property to tap into a booming market.<sup>15</sup> With the motel business steadily increasing, more and more people could own and operate a prefabricated motel in a matter of months, weeks, and sometimes days, depending on the size and scale of the proposed establishment. In addition, modular and assembly-line production reduced labor costs, which was typically the biggest expense in construction.<sup>16</sup> This type of motel construction was a first for the North Area but was already utilized elsewhere along the nation's major vehicular thoroughfares, especially in residential development.

### *Knox Home Corporation*

A Georgia-based prefabricated home manufacturer, Knox Homes Corporation was established in 1947 as an outgrowth of Knox Lumber Company (Figure 3).<sup>17</sup> Started by Peter S. Knox in the early twentieth century, Knox Lumber Company eventually entered the prefabricated home

<sup>12</sup> "Victory Auto Sale," 1961 February 7, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>13</sup> "Instant Motel' is Taking Shape on Rivers Ave in North Area," 8 April 1961, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>14</sup> The 1961, 86-unit Host of America Motel in Florence, SC took 16 weeks and the 1962, 76-unit Host of America Motel in Asheville, NC took approximately 15 weeks for completion; "New Motel In North Area Open to Visitors Today," 1961 October 1, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC; "New Motel Construction to be Resumed," 1961 October 18, *Florence Morning News*, Florence, SC; "Work Begins on 76-Unit Motel on Tunnel Road," 1962 April 10, *Asheville Citizen-Times*, Asheville, NC.

<sup>15</sup> Phone interview with Robert W. Rogers, Jr., interview by author, 2019 May 31.

<sup>16</sup> Jackle, John A, Jefferson S. Rogers, Keith A. Sculle, *The Motel in America*, Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996. 51.

<sup>17</sup> "Thomson Firm Pioneered Prefab Homes, Trailers," 1957 April 25, *Augusta Chronicle*, Augusta, GA.

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industry following World War II by producing and selling timber home kits.<sup>18</sup> Advertisements for “Knox Homes” are present in Charleston-area newspapers as early as 1947, as is a division of Knox Homes Corporation that specialized in pavement and gravel. The division was hired to grade and pave roads throughout South Carolina in the post war period.<sup>19</sup>

Knox Homes Corporation first advertised within the area’s newspapers looking for “dealers” to sell their line of single-story prefabricated homes, which were “designed by a nationally-known firm of small home architects.”<sup>20</sup> In June of 1947, the company vowed to construct 6,000 new prefabricated homes throughout the southeast to combat the housing shortage in the postwar period, a promise that the *State* described as the “first glimpse of the amazing possibilities of assembly-line production of home construction.”<sup>21</sup> A 1947 photograph depicting South Carolina Governor Strom Thurmond with members of the Knox family in front of a prefabricated home confirms the corporation was most likely heavily involved in the development of postwar neighborhoods throughout the state at this time (Figure 4). Knox Homes Corporation did not officially break into the Charleston market, however, until 1953 through the endorsement of North Area real estate firms Stevenson, Zimmerman & Co. and W.C. Wilbur & Co., a business that opened on Rivers Avenue as a direct result of the midcentury population increase.<sup>22</sup>

In 1955, Knox Homes were available for purchase in Wildwood, a new North Area neighborhood located approximately six miles north of the Host of America Motel along Rivers Avenue.<sup>23</sup> Many of the company’s prefabricated ranch-style dwellings are still standing today and represent North Charleston’s housing spike in the years following World War II. Two years later, several one-story Knox Homes were under construction in new housing developments in Mount Pleasant and West Ashley as the company quickly became a significant player in developing Charleston’s midcentury suburban neighborhoods (Figure 5).<sup>24</sup> With a presence in the North Area and a reputation of providing quick, quality housing, Knox Homes Corporation and its efficient assembly-line process allowed Rogers’ to enter into America’s fruitful motor-centric tourism industry within weeks.

#### *Postwar Motel Boom in North Charleston*

At the time of the motel’s completion in late 1961, it became the ninth motel to open in the North Area, the third in 1961 alone.<sup>25</sup> Although Charleston experienced a significant motel boom in the 1950s, the North Area’s motel industry did not gain significant momentum until 1961 with the construction of three motels: the Catalina Motel, Siesta Motel, and Host of America Motel.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>18</sup> New South Associates, “Guidelines for Evaluation: Ranch Homes in Georgia,” unpublished report, prepared for Georgia Transmissions Corporation, Department of Transportation, Georgia.

<sup>19</sup> “3,350,000 in Road Project Bids Opened by Highway Commission,” 1960 August 18, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC; “Charleston Work Included in \$5,210,740 Highway Bids,” 1951 January 11, *Evening Post*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>20</sup> “Now Ready: Knox Homes,” 1947 May 19, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>21</sup> “6,000 Homes in Southeast are Promised,” 1947 June 1, *State*, Columbia, SC.

<sup>22</sup> “Here’s Real News for Home Seekers,” 1953 April 26, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>23</sup> “Attention Veterans,” 1955 October 2, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>24</sup> “No Payment Down,” 1957 May 26, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>25</sup> “Charleston’s Motel Boom,” 1962 August 19, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>26</sup> “Charleston’s Motel Boom,” 1962 August 19, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

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Although tourist camps had historically lined Rivers Avenue in the pre- and post-war periods, they could not accommodate the area's growing number of motorists. The construction of the three "motor inns" between late 1960 and 1961 established the North Area as a lodging destination on par with the well-established coastal tourist route along U.S. Highway 17.

According to the *Florence Morning News* in 1962, Host of America was a new "nationwide organization," or small franchise, potentially connected with the Knox Homes Corporation.<sup>27</sup> According to Rogers Jr., Knox Homes Corporation intended to trademark the chain and planned to build "similar units" as the North Area motel in Florida and North Carolina.<sup>28</sup> By 1969, a Host of America opened in a former Quality Inn in Melbourne, FL along Route 1 and today is known as the River Palm Motel at No. 420 S. Harbor Blvd.<sup>29</sup> Sheppard designed a Host of America Motel in Florence, SC in late 1961 at 829 S. Irby Street, also manufactured by Knox Homes Corporation and today heavily deteriorated, and another in 1962 in Asheville, NC, the only Host of America confirmed through research as completed in North Carolina.<sup>30</sup> In 1966, a fourth Host of America Motel was erected at 4502 Devine Street in Columbia, SC and has since been demolished.<sup>31</sup> There is no record, however, of the franchise growing after 1966, and it is unclear if all were associated with Knox Homes Corporation.

According to Rogers, Jr., the North Area's Host of America Motel ran "at capacity" from its opening in 1961 to the early 1970s. The Host of America Motel was also a popular destination for those visiting the Citadel. The motel recorded one of its highest revenue-producing weekends during the Citadel's Parents' Weekend of 1963.<sup>32</sup> In an interview with the *News & Courier*, Rogers claimed visitation had reached that high only one other time, during 1961 when the Citadel won the South Conference football championship.<sup>33</sup> The motel primary customer base, however, was formed by families, government contractors, and salesmen associated with the nearby naval base and shipyard:

We opened in that marketplace because it was one of the largest industrial and military complexes in the country. We ran a phenomenal business and constant occupation from a commercial standpoint. We weren't in the tourism business...maybe about six weeks in the spring for azaleas we would have tourists but that's it.<sup>34</sup>

The *News & Courier* confirmed this in 1979, reporting that the Host of America Motel hosted "many businesspeople especially those associated with the Charleston Naval Base."<sup>35</sup> The motel frequently advertised its location as mere blocks from the government facility throughout the 1960s and even often encouraged the spouses of servicemen to apply for employment at the

<sup>27</sup> "City to Have New Motel," 1961 August 15, *Florence Mornings News*, Florence, SC.

<sup>28</sup> "City to Have New Motel," 1961 August 15, *Florence Mornings News*, Florence, SC; Phone interview with Robert W. Rogers, Jr., interview by author, 2019 May 31.

<sup>29</sup> "Make Mom Happy," 1969 May 10, *Florida Today*, Cocoa Beach, FL.

<sup>30</sup> "New Motel Construction to be Resumed," 1961 October 18, *Florence Morning News*, Florence, SC.

<sup>31</sup> "Work Begins on 76-Unit Motel on Tunnel Road," 1962 April 10, *Asheville Citizen-Times*, Asheville, NC.

<sup>32</sup> "City May Have Set Record for Visitors," 1963 November 11, *News and Courier*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>33</sup> "City May Have Set Record for Visitors," 1963 November 11, *News and Courier*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>34</sup> Phone interview with Robert W. Rogers, Jr., interview by author, 2019 May 31.

<sup>35</sup> "Growth of City Measured by Number of Restaurants," 1979 July 10, *News and Courier*, Charleston, SC.

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motel's restaurant or lounge.<sup>36</sup> For the housekeeping staff, however, the motel called for African American maids in 1962.<sup>37</sup>

Throughout its first years of operation, the Host of America Motel continued to advertise for black staff, such as porters, in 1961, and specified race when seeking personnel, such as an ad for a "retired white man" for maintenance work in 1963.<sup>38</sup> While African Americans were employed to the hotel, it is highly unlikely they were welcome there as patrons in the 1960s. Although there is not formal documentation of segregation at the Host of America Motel prior to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, it almost certainly was a white-only space, as most motels and hotels in the Charleston area were segregated. At the time of the motel's construction, Charleston County maintained segregation in nearly every element of life, including transportation systems, public schools, parks, churches, theaters, hotels, and restaurants.<sup>39</sup> For travel accommodations, black travelers across the nation often used *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, which served as a publication intended to provide African American travelers with information on what accommodations were open to black patrons.<sup>40</sup> The St. James, or James Hotel, on Spring Street in downtown Charleston, as well as a few boarding houses scattered throughout the city, were the only places advertised as allowing black lodgers.

The impact of the Civil Rights Act was not felt immediately in the Charleston Lowcountry. Throughout the summer of 1964 after the act's signing, the *Evening Post* continued to document race-related altercations at restaurants, entertainment venues and beaches, while the Host of America Motel continued to include race when advertising for employees.<sup>41</sup> The motel advertised for a "settled colored man" to do porter work in 1965, as well as "colored men...only settled, sober" to do light work and a "settled colored man" for "clean-up" work in 1967.<sup>42</sup> It is probable that the Host of America catered to an all-white clientele throughout the period of significance.

In 1966, Rogers enlarged the amenities at the Host of America Motel by constructing a two-story, Neoclassical Revival addition to the Main Motel Building's façade. The addition included a full downstairs restaurant and upstairs cocktail lounge that not only catered to the motel's visitors but also the local North Area population. The new Pilgrim House Restaurant, named to honor the area's colonial heritage, opened in June of 1966. Until the motel's decline in the early 1970s, the restaurant employed locals as hostesses, managers, bartenders, waiters/waitresses, bus staff, and dishwashers.<sup>43</sup> The Pilgrim House Restaurant was open from 6:00 AM to 10:30 PM,

<sup>36</sup> "Waitress," 1967 September 13, *News and Courier*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>37</sup> "Woman Wanted," 1962 March 22, *News and Courier*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>38</sup> "Wanted," 1961 November 9, *News and Courier*, Charleston, SC; "Retired," 1963 June 14, *News and Courier*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>39</sup> Fraser, Walter J., *Charleston! Charleston!*, University of South Carolina Press: Columbia, 1992. 411.

<sup>40</sup> Green, Victor and George I. Smith, *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, New York: Green & Smith, 1937.

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<sup>41</sup> "Area Police Keep Tension Under Control," 6 July 1964, *Evening Post*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>42</sup> "Colored Men," 1965 June 24, *News and Courier*, Charleston, SC; "Wanted," 1965 October 23, *News and Courier*, Charleston, SC; "Colored Male Porter," 1965 October 7, *News and Courier*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>43</sup> "The Pilgrim House Restaurant," 1966 June 5, *News and Courier*, Charleston, SC.

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offering breakfast, "special dinners," and "a business mens' luncheon," while the upstairs Burgundy Lounge, described as "one of North Area's nicest cocktail lounges," was open from 4:00 PM to midnight and frequently hosted business and philanthropic groups.<sup>44</sup>

According to *The Motel of America*, a 1996 study of the architectural and cultural significance of the midcentury motel, the number of motels in America peaked in the early 1960s, as nearly 61,000 motels dotted the nation's roadways. By 1972, however, that number declined by nearly fifteen percent.<sup>45</sup> One contributing factor was the replacement of small franchise motels and "mom and pop" accommodations by big chain-affiliated lodgings. In 1962, less than two percent of motels were owned and operated by chains, such as Holiday Inn, Howard Johnson, or Travelodge. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, however, that number grew significantly, reaching over sixty-four percent by 1987.<sup>46</sup> With the increased ease of automobile travel, Americans hitting the road more frequently, and innovations in hotel construction, many motorists began to see lodging chains as a more consistent and predictable option. Chain motels were often more accessible from major highways and had specific service standards, strict business procedures, and measured quality control. The local, vernacular motel ultimately gave way to the corporate chain.

The number of newspaper advertisements for the Host of America Motel, as well as the Pilgrim House Restaurant and the Burgundy Lounge, declined significantly in the 1970s, disappearing completely by 1977. In 1979, Rogers Jr. sold the property to Trivoli, Inc. for \$750,000 and although it continued to function as a motel, it never regained its 1960s popularity.<sup>47</sup> The motel was renamed the Star of America Motel after Hurricane Hugo in 1989. The motel officially closed in 2007 due to fire and building code violations, including collapsed ceilings, mold, and hazardous utilities.

### **Criterion C: Architecture**

The Host of America Motel is also architecturally significant, for its representation of vernacular applications of Modernism and Neoclassical Revival design and as a well-preserved and early example of a prefabricated motel in North Charleston, SC.

#### *Prefabricated Modular Construction*

In April of 1961, six months before the building's opening, the *News & Courier* called the proposed two-story prefabricated motel "the first of its kind in the nation," "an instant motel" in a "world already in a hurry," an "experimental job" and a "phenomenon."<sup>48</sup> Although the Host of America Motel would ultimately retain the aesthetic, architectural style, and layout that commonly defined motels across America at this time, its method of construction was unique. The Host of America Motel would be comprised of approximately sixty prefabricated motel

<sup>44</sup> "Experienced Cocktail Waitress," 1967 January 27, *News and Courier*, Charleston, SC; "Pilgrim House," 1966 October 9, *News and Courier*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>45</sup> *The Motel in America*, 20.

<sup>46</sup> *The Motel in America*, 151.

<sup>47</sup> Charleston County Register of Deeds, Deed Book S118, Page 168, Charleston County, SC.

<sup>48</sup> "Instant Motel' is Taking Shape on Rivers Avenue In North Area," 1961 April 8, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

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units manufactured and individually furnished on an assembly line over 100 miles from the property.

The construction of the Host of America Motel continued throughout 1961 simultaneously on both Rivers Avenue in Charleston's North Area neighborhood and in the Knox Homes Corporation's plant in Thomson, GA. At the motel site, Jim A. Hutchinson, Jr., Vice President of Engineering and Production for Knox Homes Corporation, and local Charleston engineer Joe Green erected a custom, two-story steel infrastructure for both the Main Motel Building and the Motel Annex. The infrastructure was designed to secure the motel rooms, arriving as sixty individual units, on equidistant tracks that allowed the furnished cubes to be slid into place once completed.<sup>49</sup>

At the same time, the motel units were produced, assembled, and furnished as individual "building blocks" in the Georgia plant.<sup>50</sup> Knox Homes Corporation was a leading modular home supplier in the southeast and although the exact type of lumber in the framing and wall finish within each of the motel units are unknown, most of the company's modular homes at this time included "only well-seasoned lumber...for structural framing" cut and dried at the company's mill in Soperton, GA and fireproof sheetrock gypsum walls.<sup>51</sup> Once the individual units were constructed, each was equipped with interior plumbing, electricity, wall-to-wall carpeting, interior décor, televisions, telephones and beds (Figure 7).<sup>52</sup>

By this time, Knox Homes Corporation was active in the Charleston housing market as a leading supplier of one and two-story prefabricated dwellings in the North Area, West Ashley, and Mount Pleasant. In September of 1960, Vice President of National Homes David L. Preston celebrated the company's presence within the growing metropolitan area: "We hope Knox is here to stay. We believe that Charleston area has a dynamic market and believe in its growth."<sup>53</sup> Creating housing for the post-war boom in neighborhoods like West Ashley's Sandalwood and North Charleston's Wildwood, Knox Homes Corporation specialized in ranch-style timber and aluminum dwellings, and continued to supply the area throughout the midcentury.<sup>54</sup> Yet, no documentation has been uncovered that suggests the company was ever involved in non-residential construction or the manufacturing of fully-furnished modular structures before 1961, both locally or anywhere in the nation.

Two years prior to the Host of America Motel's construction, however, Knox Homes Corporation merged with National Homes, deemed at this time by the *Atlanta Constitution* as the "largest prefab home builder in the world."<sup>55</sup> In 1960, National Homes recorded nearly six

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Robert W. Rogers, Jr., in person by author, 2019 August 12; "Instant Motel' is Taking Shape on Rivers Avenue In North Area," 1961 April 8, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>50</sup> "Instant Motel' is Taking Shape on Rivers Avenue In North Area," 1961 April 8, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>51</sup> "Knox Streamlines Industry, Lowers Costs, Hikes Quality," 30 March 1960, *Marietta Journal*, Marietta, GA.

<sup>52</sup> "Instant Motel' is Taking Shape on Rivers Avenue In North Area," 1961 April 8, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>53</sup> "Reception is Held At Sandalwood," 1960 September 13, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>54</sup> "Introducing the Knox Aluminum Home," 1960 September 25, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>55</sup> "Big Housing Firms Announce Merger," 1959 August 11, *The Atlanta Constitution*, Atlanta, GA.

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million annual tractor trailer miles carrying over 24,000 homes from regional plants, such as Knox's in Thomson, GA, to home sites across the United States.<sup>56</sup> With the increase in market exposure, geographic reach and funding, Knox Homes Corporation immediately made "extensive changes in their plant in Thomson, GA." The intention was to not only accommodate higher volume, but to also allow for innovation in the modular housing industry through the testing of new techniques, methods and materials.<sup>57</sup> It also became a publicly traded company, announcing shortly after the merger that the "widespread interest in prefabrication of products" would allow them to take on a significant "growth position" in diversifying their product.<sup>58</sup> It was under these conditions that Knox Home Corporation's fully-furnished, modular construction of the Host of America Motel was completed.

Although the prefabricated motel was a first for both the North Area and Knox Homes Corporation, many tourist camps and single-story motels in the post-war period utilized modular construction. Newspapers across the nation between 1953 and 1960 contain advertisements for both manufacturers producing single-story, prefabricated motel units and real estate agents marketing interlocking, quickly-erected units for property owners interested in engaging in the growing roadside hospitality industry.<sup>59</sup> In 1956, for example, the National Park Service (NPS) began construction on a prefabricated motel in Canyon Village, a new lodging complex in Yellowstone National Park as part of the government's Mission 66 project to modernize NPS' amenities nationwide. Canyon Village consisted of individual cabins and a series of one-story buildings that housed several motel units.<sup>60</sup> Unfortunately, Canyon Village failed by 1959 and the buildings have since been demolished.

In 1959, *The Capital Times* in Madison, WI called the construction of a Frank Lloyd Wright-designed prefabricated motel within the city limits by modular construction leaders Marshall Erdman and Associates as "the first prefabricated motel in the nation."<sup>61</sup> The details surrounding the motel's size, footprint and infrastructure are not known, as it is unclear if the motel was ever completed. One year later, the two-story, 100-unit prefabricated Dunes Motel was completed near Asbury Park beach in New Jersey and manufactured by Indiana-firm Hart Industries.<sup>62</sup> The Dunes Motel has since been demolished.

What project architect Edward K. Sheppard would call "a revolution in the construction business" was not that the Host of America Motel was prefabricated, as many motels at this time

<sup>56</sup> "National Brings Complete Home In On Truck," 1960 May 29, *Las Vegas Review*, Las Vegas, NV.

<sup>57</sup> "Knox Aluminum Homes To Open in Sandalwood," 1960 September 25, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>58</sup> "Thomson Firm Pioneered Prefab Homes, Trailers," 1957 April 25, *Augusta Chronicle*, Augusta, GA.

<sup>59</sup> "Distributed," 1960 September 11, *The Salt Lake Tribute*, Salt Lake City, UT; "Christiansen's Operations Have Great Impact on Phelps," 1960 September 8, *The Rhinelander Daily News*, Rhinelander, WI; "Locate Plant to Build Motels," 1961 July 16, *Scrantonian Tribute*, Scranton, PA; "Prefabricated Motel Units," 1953 December 18, *The Kansas City Times*, Kansas City, MO; "Prefabricated Motel," 1957 October 28, *The Oneonta Star*, Oneonta, NY.

<sup>60</sup> Carr Ethan, *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma*, University of Massachusetts Press: Boston, 2007. 235.

<sup>61</sup> "Wright Motel Site Deal OK'd," 1959 May 26, *The Capital Times*, Madison, WI.

<sup>62</sup> "100-Unit Dunes Motel in Neptune to have Indoor-Outdoor Pool," *Asbury Park Press*, Asbury, NJ.

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were, but that each motel unit was fully furnished before arriving at the site.<sup>63</sup> Described as “a shell home in reverse,” the North Area’s Host of America Motel was unique in applying the prefabrication process not only to the units’ infrastructure but also to the units’ interior design.<sup>64</sup> In 1970, this concept of fully furnished, prefabricated and stackable “building blocks” was described by a New Jersey reporter as “pioneering” and a technique only mastered in 1967 with the construction of the Habitat, a prefabricated motel/apartment building with 354 concrete units at the International and Universal Exposition, a World’s Fair in Montreal, Canada:

The complete guest room could be prefabricated in a factory, and to a great extent, furnished, transported to the site and put into place. With this type of motel building, many innovations in equipment and furnishings will develop.<sup>65</sup>

The Habitat’s stackable, fully-furnished modular units were considered innovative at this time, yet the North Area’s Host of America Motel displayed this construction technique six years prior to the Habitat.

By the summer of 1961, the furnished Host of America Motel units arrived on site, where each room was lifted into the steel infrastructure created by Roger’s on-site team.<sup>66</sup> At this time, less than a dozen workers also infilled the “small area between units,” erected a roof at the second story with materials supplied by Charleston Sheet Metal and Roofing Works, Inc. and applied a brick veneer made of local Salisbury Brick Corporation “Summerville Brick” at each end of the Main Motel Building and Motel Annex.<sup>67</sup> Paired full-height, full-width windows were also added to each motel unit on site, as well as a hollow wood door capped with a transom. Because the rooms were already equipped with utilities, workers connected all wiring and piping to a main system along the south wall, which was clad in Knox Home Corporation’s typical aluminum siding. The air conditioning vents, present in each unit’s bathroom, were connected to a system on the roof and each room’s intercom, referred to as the “famous ‘Call Boy’ system” and used for room service, was wired to the front desk.<sup>68</sup>

In October of 1961, owner Robert “Woody” Rogers announced the opening of “60 beautifully appointed rooms” at the new Host of America Motel (Figure 8). At the property’s completion, the complex contained a two-story row and a small two-story annex of motel rooms, a ceramic-tile pool and a reception wing with a lounge and banquet room (Figure 9).<sup>69</sup> A large, neon sign along Rivers Avenue boasted a colonial design to honor the area’s eighteenth century history and was topped with a star (Figure 10). In an article titled “Charleston’s Motel Boom” one year later, the *News & Courier* celebrated the success of Roger’s Host of America Motel, deeming it an

<sup>63</sup> “Instant Motel’ is Taking Shape on Rivers Avenue In North Area,” 1961 April 8, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>64</sup> “Instant Motel’ is Taking Shape on Rivers Avenue In North Area,” 1961 April 8, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>65</sup> “Innovations Will Develop,” 1970 April 15, *The Courier-News*, Bridgewater, NJ.

<sup>66</sup> “Instant Motel’ is Taking Shape on Rivers Ave in North Area,” 8 April 1961, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>67</sup> “Instant Motel’ is Taking Shape on Rivers Ave in North Area,” 8 April 1961, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>68</sup> “Ad,” 1961 October 1, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC; phone interview with Robert W. Rogers, Jr., interview by author, 2019 May 31.

<sup>69</sup> “Ad,” 1961 October 1, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

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important player in the area's midcentury revitalization and its representation of "a new dimension in construction."<sup>70</sup>

*Midcentury Architecture*

The overall Midcentury Modern design of the Host of America Motel was the work of Charlotte-based architect Edward K. Sheppard (1912-1978) of E.K. Sheppard & Associates (Figure 11). A native of North Carolina, Sheppard previously worked for Charlotte firm Biberstein & Bowles, which specialized in industrial mills and large commercial spaces. Sheppard split from the firm in 1953 and officially established Edward K. Sheppard & Associates two years later.<sup>71</sup> With his firm, Sheppard designed a two-story, 100-unit independent motel on Assembly Street in Columbia, SC in 1958 and in 1960, a two-story, 75-unit Holiday Inn Motel at the intersection of Dargan and Palmetto Streets in Florence, SC, neither of which were of modular construction.<sup>72</sup> Although the exact style and layout of the projects is unclear as they have since been demolished, both motels were described as containing large, modern "glass and aluminum fronts," similar to the Host of America Motel.

The overall architectural character and configuration of the Host of America Motel are also representative of motel design at this time. Although unconventional in construction, the property's style, composition, footprint, and amenities reflect those common in motels across America in the 1960s. The Host of America Motel was built as a typical "motor inn," defined as a two-to-three-story structure surrounding a courtyard or common space often constructed in a metropolitan area (Figure 12).<sup>73</sup> In addition, the Host of America Motel's amenities, such as a centralized ceramic tile pool and banquet room and cocktail lounge, reflect the midcentury motor inn model of placing priority on outdoor swimming facilities and extensive public indoor spaces for both local residents and patrons.<sup>74</sup>

Architecturally, the Host of America Motel also reflects common motel design standards of the midcentury, especially that of Holiday Inn. Typical of the chain's early 1960s design were two-story, flat-roof buildings with courtyard-facing walls of glass to create a "strikingly modern appearance" for both the patron inside and the passerby.<sup>75</sup> The chain also incorporated concrete floors and decorative concrete screens into their design standards to reduce the risk of fire.<sup>76</sup> Metal details in window frames and railings, together with the concrete structural elements and the vast use of glass, brought lightness, as well as "modernity and sophistication," to the Holiday Inn model as a means to maintain uniqueness in an industry saturated with small, one-story, brick and wooden independent motels.<sup>77</sup> Many of these elements were also stylistically popular at this time across all types of construction and are character-defining of the Midcentury Modern

<sup>70</sup> "Charleston's Motel Boom," 1962 August 19, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>71</sup> Charlotte City Directory, 1951, 1953, 1955, Ancestry.com, accessed 2 September 2019.

<sup>72</sup> "100 Motel Unit Set for Assembly Street," 1958 June 28, *State*, Columbia, SC; "Florence to Get New \$500,000 Motel," 1960 May 1, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>73</sup> *The Motel in America*, 51.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *The Motel in America*, 269.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *The Motel in America*, 270.

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aesthetic. For example, “entire window walls” with metal detailing was a trademark of Knox Homes Corporation’s prefabricated dwellings as it conveyed “the feeling of spaciousness and freedom.”<sup>78</sup> It is possible that Sheppard used the Holiday Inn model from his previous project for his designs of the Host of America Motel.

After the completion of the Host of America Motel, Sheppard designed a Host of America Motel in Florence, SC at 829 S. Irby Street. Also manufactured by Knox Homes Corporation, the 86-unit, two-story motel is now abandoned and deteriorating, and does not retain an architectural character similar to that of the North Area motel. According to the *Florence Mornings News* in 1961, the Florence motel was part of a larger movement by the small Host of America franchise to build “similar units” with Knox Homes in North Carolina and Florida.<sup>79</sup> Sheppard designed another Host of America Motel in 1962 in Asheville, NC at 200 Tunnel Road, which has been significantly altered. Sheppard additionally designed a Thunderbird Motel, now known as the Palmetto Inn & Suites and also heavily altered, on US 301 in Orangeburg, SC in 1962.<sup>80</sup> All resemble the North Area’s Host of America Motel layout through the two-story, narrow row of motel units and emphasized registration/restaurant space, but are architecturally distinct from Sheppard’s 1961 project.

In addition to the Host of America franchise, Knox Homes Corporation continued to construct other motel modular units after their Rivers Avenue project, although it is unclear if they were fully pre-furnished. In 1962, Knox Homes Corporation supplied 120 “prebuilt units” for a motel in Greenville, NC, the same year the *South Bend Tribune* called the assembly of a 43-unit, two-story prefabricated motel in Indiana a “new-construction concept” and “unusual.”<sup>81</sup> In 1965, Knox Homes Corporation provided eighty prefabricated units for The King’s Inn near Knoxville, TN and in 1966, seventy-two units for the Dorchester Motor Lodge, another North Charleston motel owned by the Rogers family.<sup>82</sup>

In 1966, Rogers expanded on the Host of America Motel’s amenities and constructed a two-story, Neoclassical Revival addition to the motel’s primary façade (Figure 13). Inside the large addition, Rogers opened the Pilgrim House Restaurant downstairs, named to honor the area’s colonial history, and the Burgundy Lounge upstairs, named for its burgundy shag carpet, to cater to both local residents and motel patrons (Figure 14). Although it altered the motel’s façade, the addition’s Neoclassical Revival exterior represents the use of regional-inspired architectural styles that dominated motel architecture of the 1960s. According to a 2017 article titled “The Rise and Fall of the Great American Motel,” in *Smithsonian* magazine:

<sup>78</sup> “Knox Puts Glass to Good Use,” 1960 September 25, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

<sup>79</sup> “City to Have New Motel,” 1961 August 15, *Florence Mornings News*, Florence, SC.

<sup>80</sup> “New Thunderbird Motel Slated to Open August 1,” 1962 April 15, *The Times and Democrat*, Orangeburg, SC; “New Motel Construction to be Resumed,” 1961 October 18, *Florence Morning News*, Florence, SC; “City to Have New Motel,” 1961 August 15, *Florence Mornings News*, Florence, SC.

<sup>81</sup> “Schumacher-Sons, Inc. Builds Unusual Motel Units,” 1962 August 13, *South Bend Tribune*, South Bend, IN.

<sup>82</sup> “Bids Asked on New Motel Here,” 1965 January 26, *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, Knoxville, TN; “\$1 Million Motel on ‘13’ Planned” 1962 April 1, *Virginian-Pilot*, Norfolk, VA.

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While motel rooms were plain and functional, the facades took advantage of regional styles (and, occasionally, stereotypes). Owners employed stucco, adobe, stone, brick – whatever was handy – to attract guests.<sup>83</sup>

Typically built around a theme, motor inns across the nation integrated vernacular design as a means to attract motorists and the business of locals. By utilizing not only iconic colonial American structures but also regional and “easily digressive symbolic meanings” as inspiration, many midcentury motels were designed to evoke comfort and confidence in service along America’s growing highway system.<sup>84</sup> For example, with the midcentury restoration of George Washington’s Mount Vernon, a national landmark that inspired much within the Colonial Revival and Neoclassical Revival architectural movements of the early to mid-twentieth century, many 1950s roadside structures utilized the colonial plantation’s architectural features as a way to capture the traditional values and aesthetic that Mount Vernon represented. Roadside motels often used the architectural vocabulary of Mount Vernon to convey a sense of “hospitality, good taste and patriotism,” as understood by their white middle-class clientele.<sup>85</sup>

The Host of America’s 1966 addition, which retains its full-height portico, 8/8 wooden sash windows, the central entry’s surrounding fanlight and sidelights, interior pine paneling, as well as the colonial-inspired monikers and main motel sign, was a stark contrast to the building’s overall modernistic aesthetic displayed through the vast use of glass, decorative concrete and metal railings. Its Neoclassical Revival characteristics not only represent the widespread trend of replicating America’s Federal-era architecture, but also the use of traditional regional architectural elements in the nation’s growing roadside lodging to create assurance and familiarity for the growing numbers of predominantly white middle-class travelers during an age of mass modern development and vehicular freedom.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Wood, Andrew, “The Rise and Fall of the Great American Motel,” 2017 June 30, *Smithsonian Magazine*, Washington, D.C.

<sup>84</sup> Brandt, Lydia. *First in the Homes of his Countrymen: George Washington’s Mount Vernon in the American Imagination*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, 2016. 172.

<sup>85</sup> Brandt, Lydia. *First in the Homes of his Countrymen: George Washington’s Mount Vernon in the American Imagination*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, 2016. 172-176.

<sup>86</sup> Rhoads, William. “Roadside Colonial: Early American Design for the Automobile Age, 1910-1940.” *Winterthur Portfolio*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986. 133.

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#### INTERVIEWS

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#### **Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- ☒ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested  
☐ previously listed in the National Register  
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register  
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark  
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Primary location of additional data:**

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office  
☐ Other State agency  
☐ Federal agency  
☐ Local government  
☐ University  
☐ Other  
Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** 6376

Host of America Motel  
Name of Property

Charleston Co., SC  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.98

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 32.853225 | Longitude: -79.972712 |
| 2. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 3. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 4. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |

### Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary of the nominated property is shown as the heavy red line marked on the accompanying Charleston County GIS map, created at a scale of 1 inch= 90 feet.

### Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary is defined by the property's current tax parcel, which contains the historic resources that defined the Host of America Motel from 1961 through the early 1970s.

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Brittany V. Lavelle Tulla  
organization: BVL Historic Preservation Research  
street & number: 2115 Oyster Reef Lane  
city or town: Mount Pleasant state: SC zip code: 29466  
e-mail: BRITTANY@BVLHistoricPreservationResearch.com  
telephone: 7329967745  
date: October 13, 2019

## Additional Documentation

Host of America Motel  
Name of Property

Charleston Co., SC  
County and State

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### Owner Information

Owner's Name (individual, organization, corporation, etc.): Ham Morrison  
Name of Contact Person (if different from above):  
Mailing Address: 255 St. Philip Street, Charleston, SC 29403  
Telephone: 8432707132  
E-mail address (if available):

### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

Name of Property: Star of America Motel (today)

City or Vicinity: North Charleston

County: Charleston

State: SC

Photographer: Cliff Lavelle

Date Photographed: May 2019

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 21: Main (east) façade

Host of America Motel

Charleston Co., SC

Name of Property

County and State

- 2 of 21: Detail of central door at primary (east) façade
- 3 of 21: North elevation
- 4 of 21: North elevation, looking northwest
- 5 of 21: North elevation of the Registration Wing and Main Motel Building, view looking south from the pool
- 6 of 21: View of the Registration Wing and Main Motel Building, looking southwest
- 7 of 21: West (rear) elevation of the Registration Wing, looking east towards Rivers Avenue
- 8 of 21: View looking west at the Main Motel Building
- 9 of 21: North elevation, Main Motel Building, looking southwest
- 10 of 21: North elevation, Main Motel Building, looking southeast
- 11 of 21: North elevation detail, showing original railing, concrete screen
- 12 of 21: Main Motel Building, first floor, looking east
- 13 of 21: Detail of original aluminum storefront, north elevation of the Main Motel Building
- 14 of 21: Detail of original steel infrastructure and copper piping in motel rooms
- 15 of 21: View looking north on Rivers Avenue, towards original pool and Motel Annex
- 16 of 21: Looking northeast, original pool and Motel Annex
- 17 of 21: South elevation of Motel Annex, infilled original pool at foreground
- 18 of 21: View looking south towards the Main Motel Building and Registration Wing from the Motel Annex, infilled original pool at foreground
- 19 of 21: View looking north from the Main Motel Building
- 20 of 21: View looking east from roof of the Main Motel Building
- 21 of 21: View looking west from roof of the Main Motel Building

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- Figure 2: "Instant Motel' is Taking Shape on Rivers Avenue in North Area," 1961 April 8, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.
- Figure 3: 1947 photograph of Knox Lumber tractor trailer used to transport prefabricated homes, courtesy of the Georgia Archives, University of Georgia, Athens, GA.
- Figure 4: 1947 photograph of Strom Thurmond with the Knox brothers, courtesy of the Georgia Archives, University of Georgia, Athens, GA.
- Figure 5: "The Knox Aluminum Home," 1960 September 25, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.
- Figure 6: c. 1990s photograph of the Star of America Motel, looking north from the Registration Wing, private collection of the Patel family
- Figure 7: "New Motel Features Sound," 1961, *News & Courier*, from Vertical File at the Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, SC.
- Figure 8: "Business Spotlight: Dorchester Motor Lodge," 1971 July 21, *North Charleston Banner*, North Charleston, SC.
- Figure 9: Sheet 119, Vol. 2, 1964 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, SC.
- Figure 10: Detail of sign from "Host of America Motel," 1961 October 1, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

Host of America Motel

Charleston Co., SC

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Figure 11: Detail of original drawing from "Host of America Motel," 1961 October 1, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

Figure 12: "The Evolution of the American Motel as a building type," *The Motel in America*, pg. 37.

Figure 13: Early photograph before late-twentieth century renovations, looking south from the Motel Annex, private collection of the Patel family

Figure 14: Pilgrim House advertisement, 1966 October 6, *News & Courier*, Charleston, SC.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



## 3245 Rivers Ave

**Parcel ID:** 4691100167

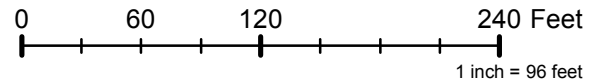
**OWNER1:** SSD OF CHARLESTON INC

**ACREAGE:** 0.98

**PLAT\_BOOK\_PAGE:** Q-47

**DEED\_BOOK\_PAGE:** F655-712

**Jurisdiction:** CITY OF NORTH  
CHARLESTON



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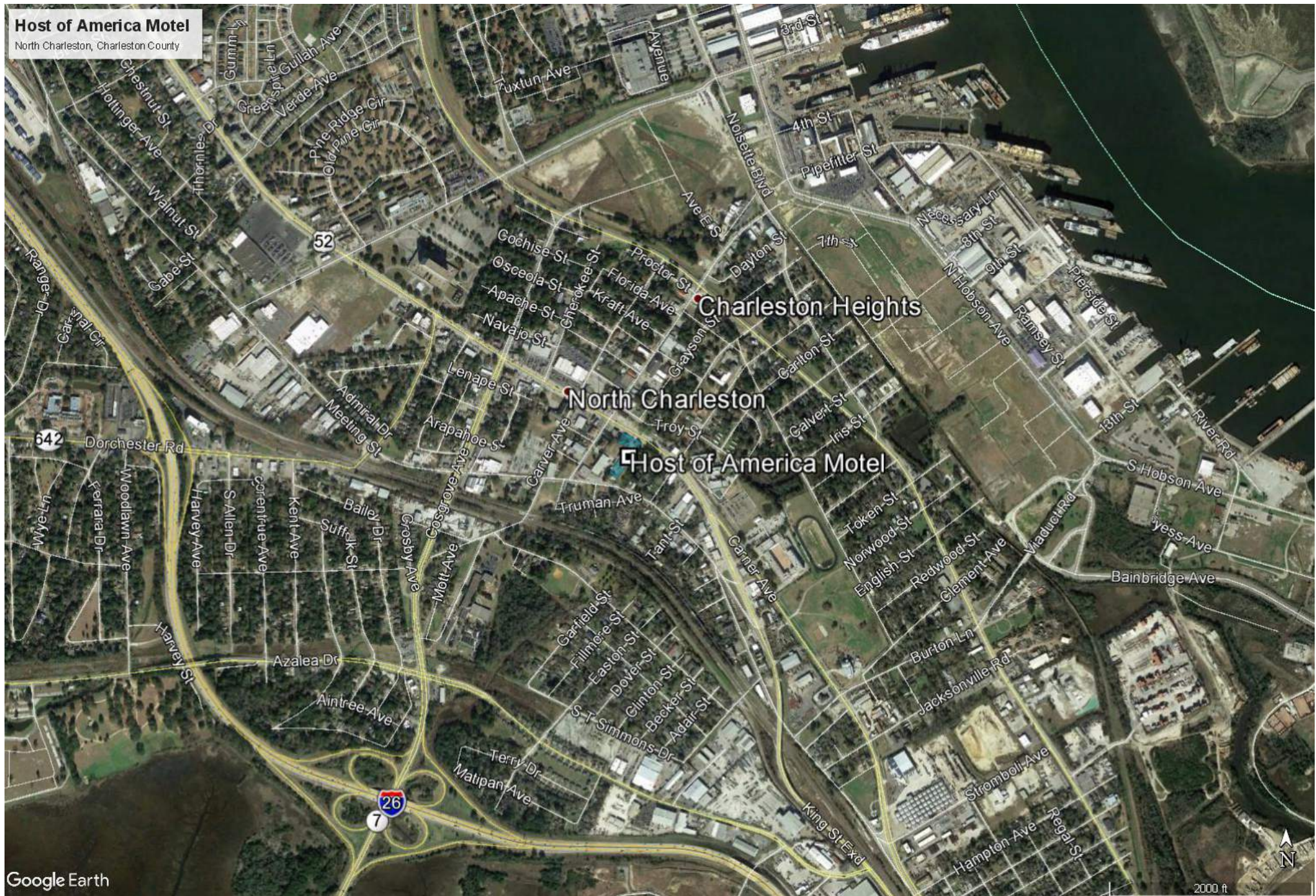
Author: Charleston County SC  
Date: 4/29/2019

**Host of America Motel**  
North Charleston, Charleston County



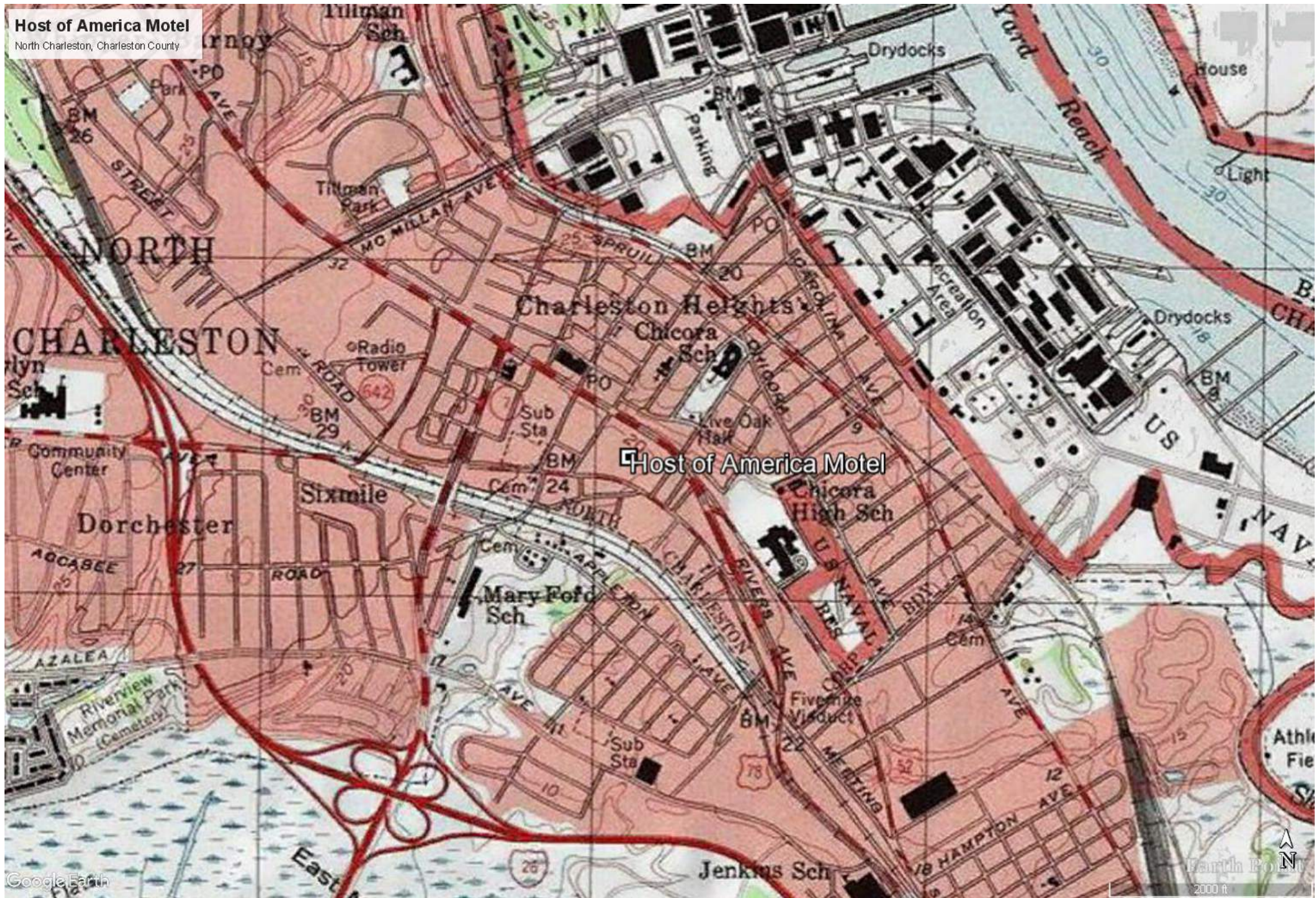
# Host of America Motel

North Charleston, Charleston County



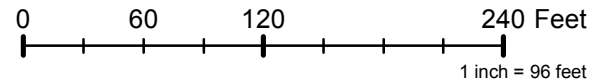
# Host of America Motel

North Charleston, Charleston County





## Photo Log, Exterior



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Author: Charleston County SC  
Date: 7/9/2019

















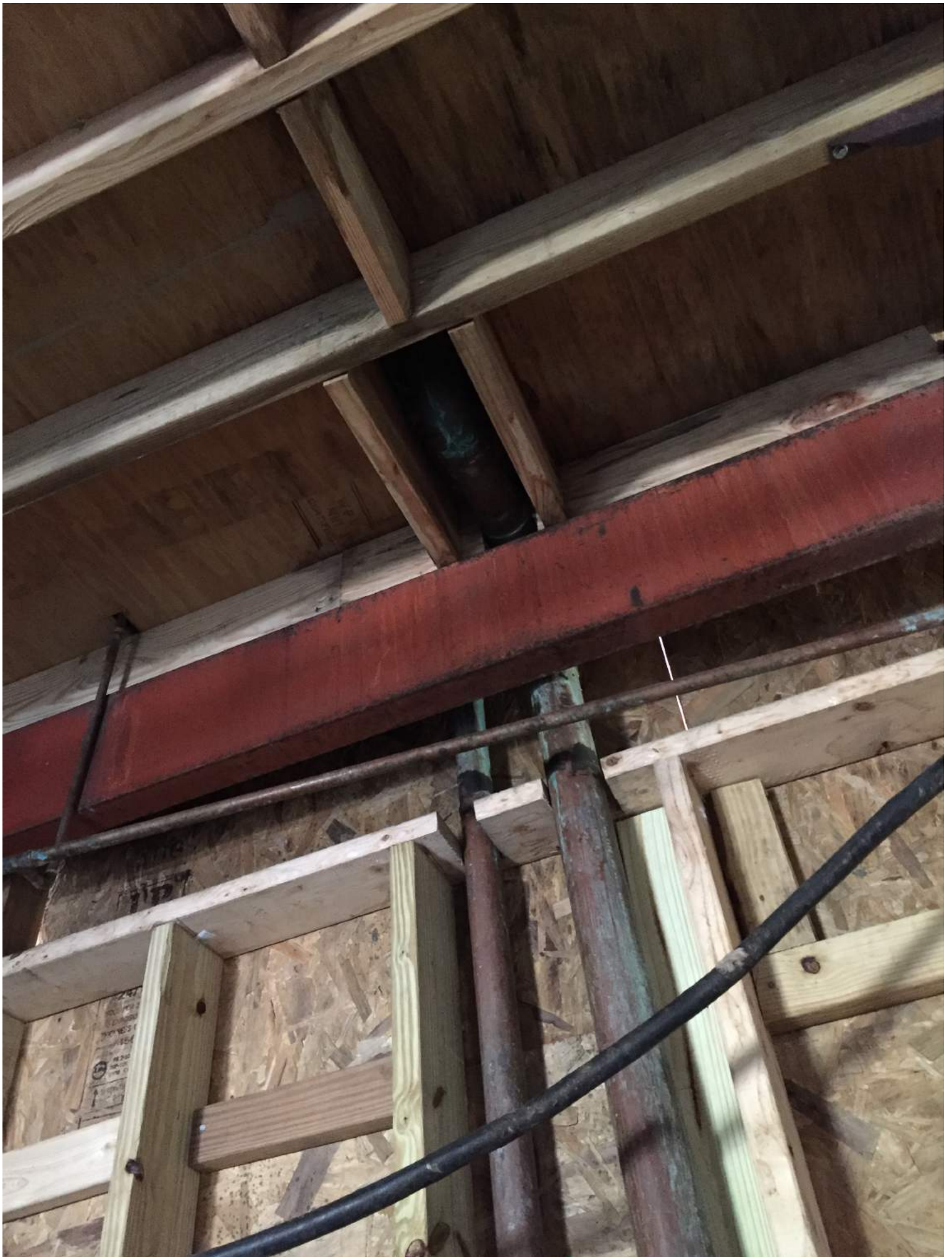
















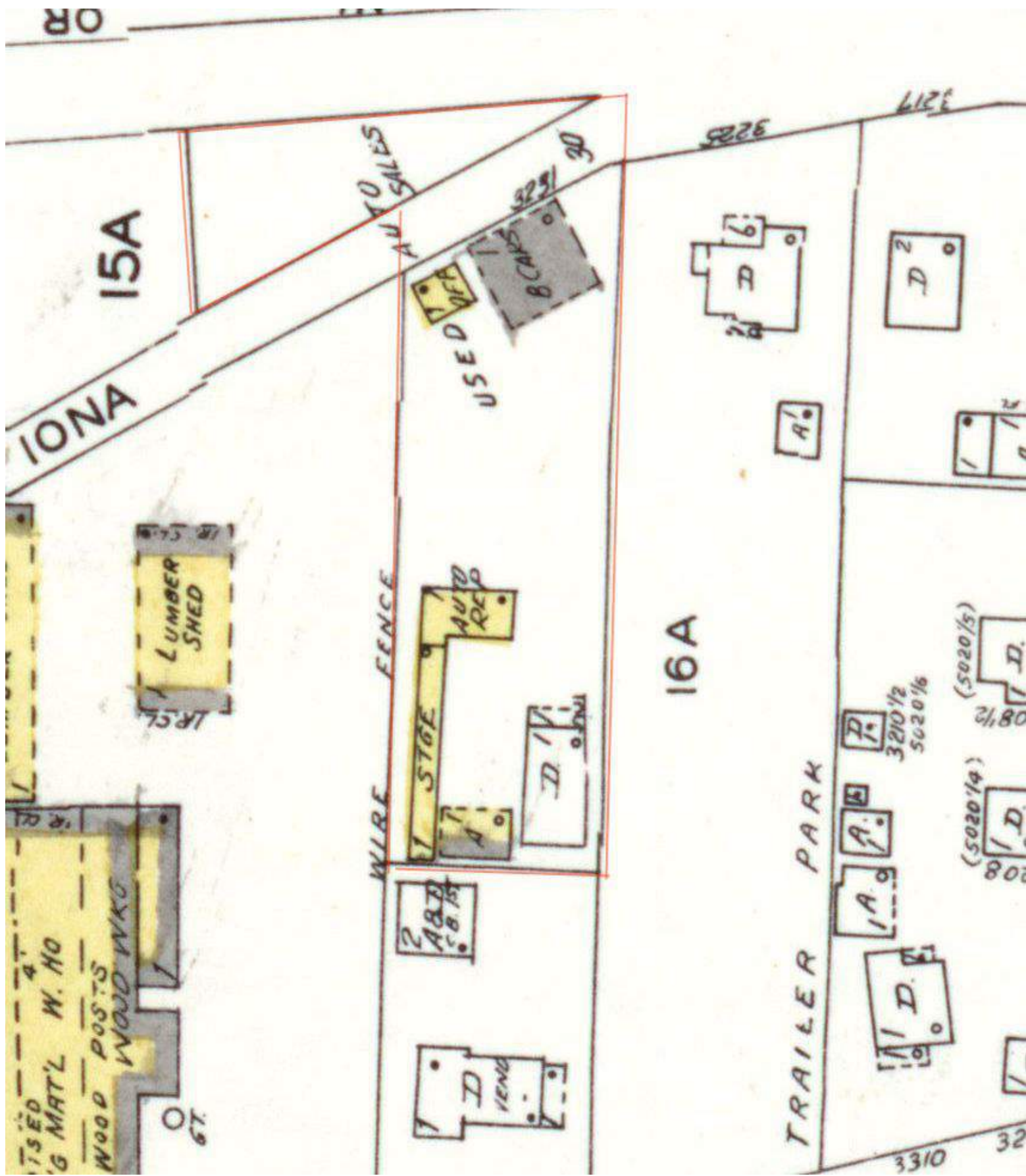














What Next?

## 'Instant Motel' Is Taking Shape On Rivers Avenue In North Area

### C. Ford River To Retire At Geer Drug C

After 48 years with Drug Co., C. Ford River May 1.

During 36 years of h ment Mr. Rivers was man for the firm in th part of the state, west tee River.

B. Owen Geer, presi he had asked Mr. River a memoir of his experi ing the early days of pany. He was hired by pany's late founder. Geer on May 1, 1913.

Mr. Rivers plans to his farm on the Ash He and his wife preser 4 Hagood Ave. They children. Dr. C. Ford of Charleston and Mrs Roebuck Jr. of Washir

### Postman Defen Dog On His Ro

WINCHESTER, Engl: A postman went to t for a dog on his rout

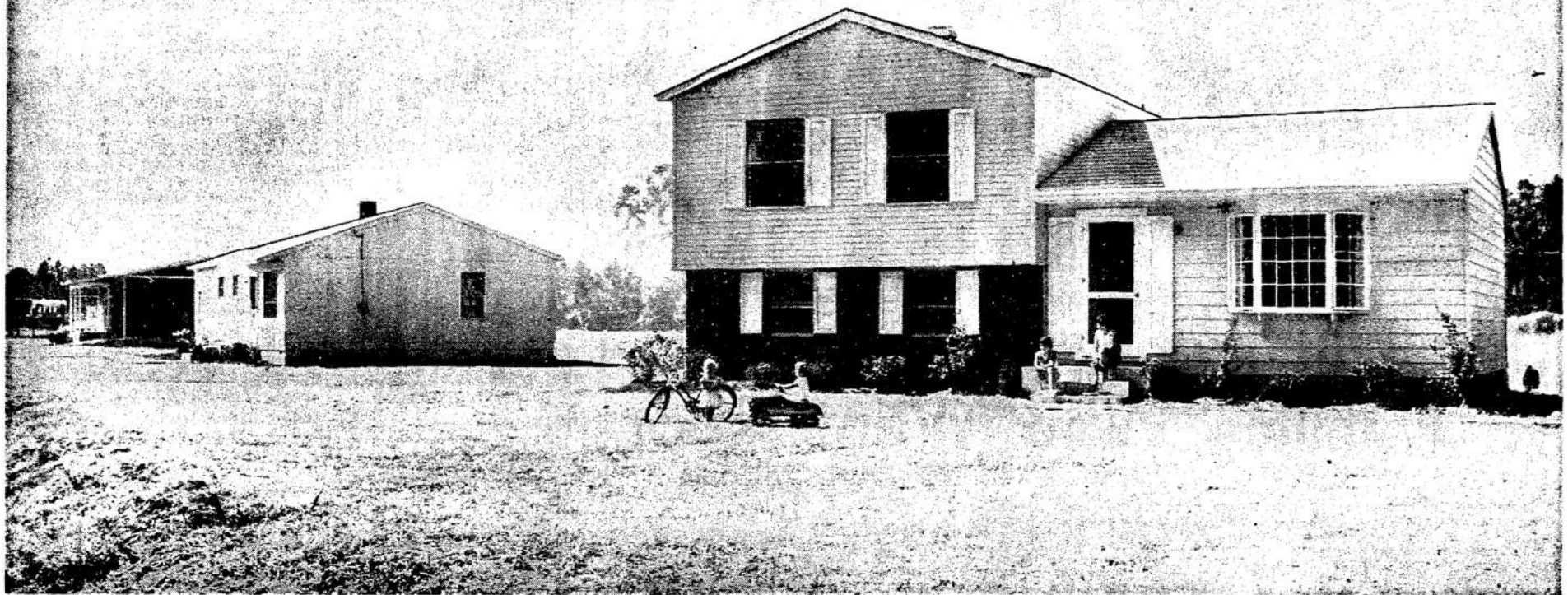
William Ruffle testifi rah Winkworth's elkhou is docile. Ruffle was c witness in a case broug Mrs. Winkworth after t bitter a youngster.



MD-62



*Introducing*  
**THE KNOX ALUMINUM HOME**



*New Knox Viking Aluminum Homes Ready For Viewing By Public*



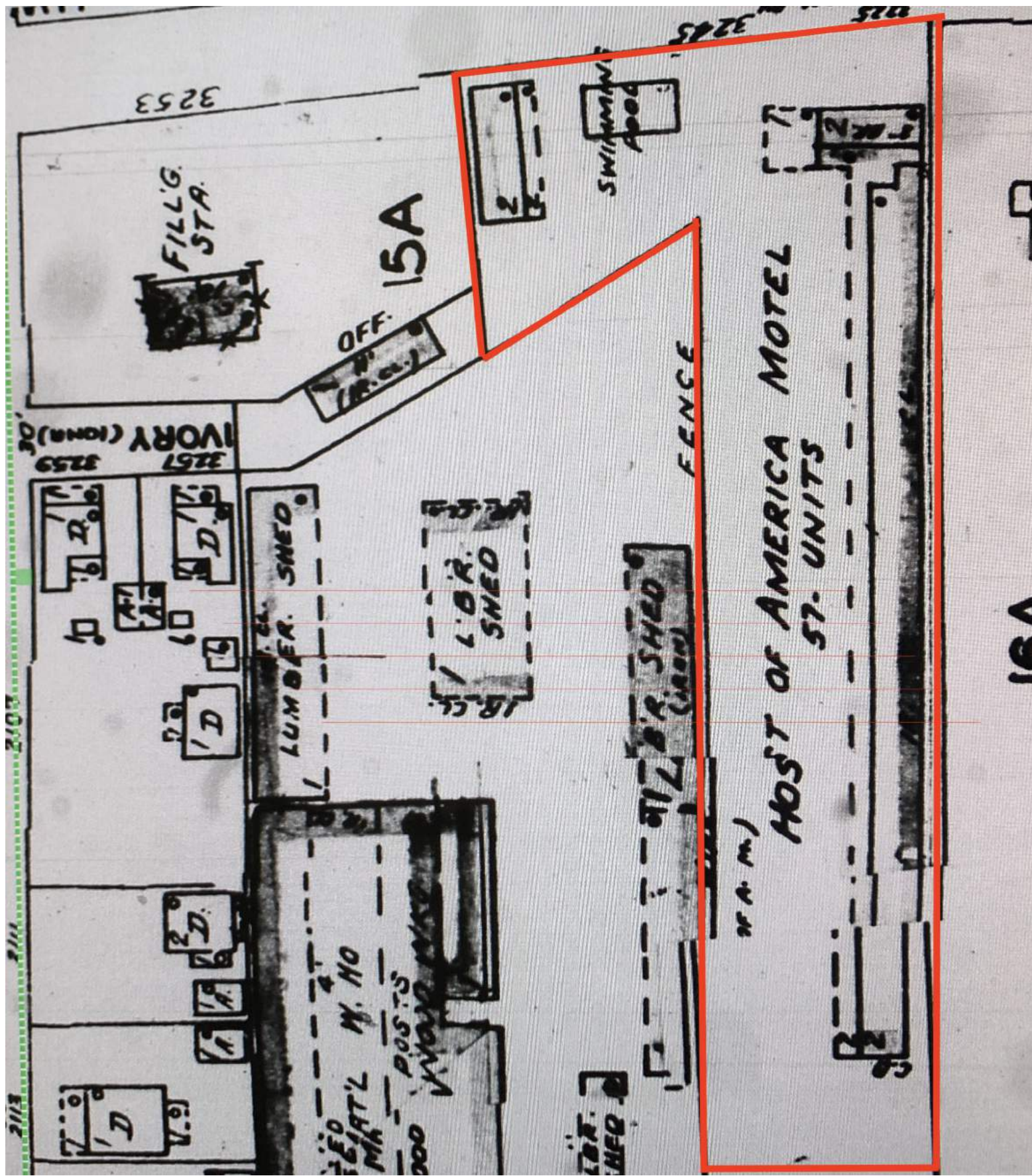
X

Hotels &  
Motels - Host of America  
Charles

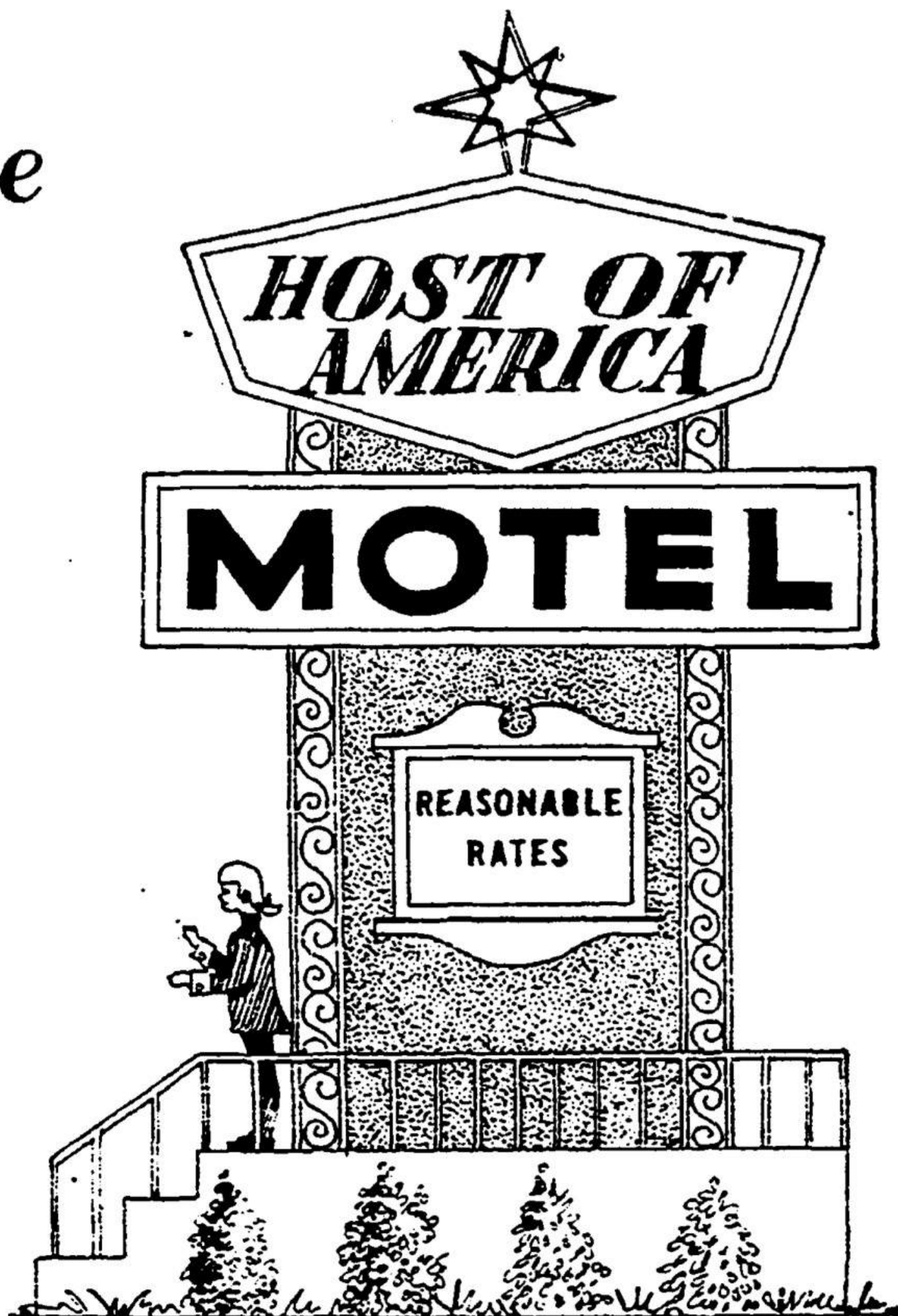


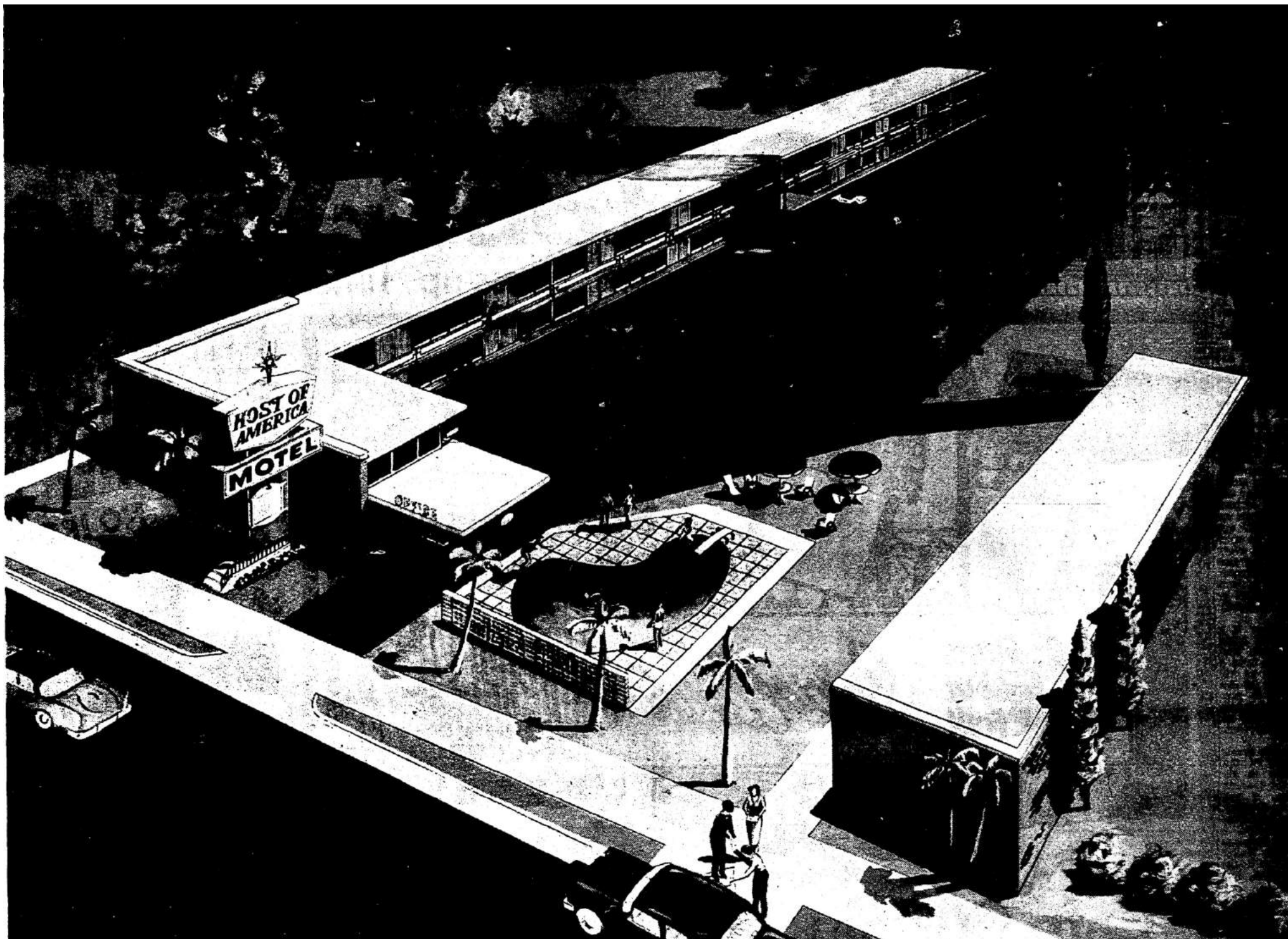
**NEW MOTEL FEATURES SOUND - PROOF ROOMS**  
Outside: Three - Hole Golf Putting Green





e





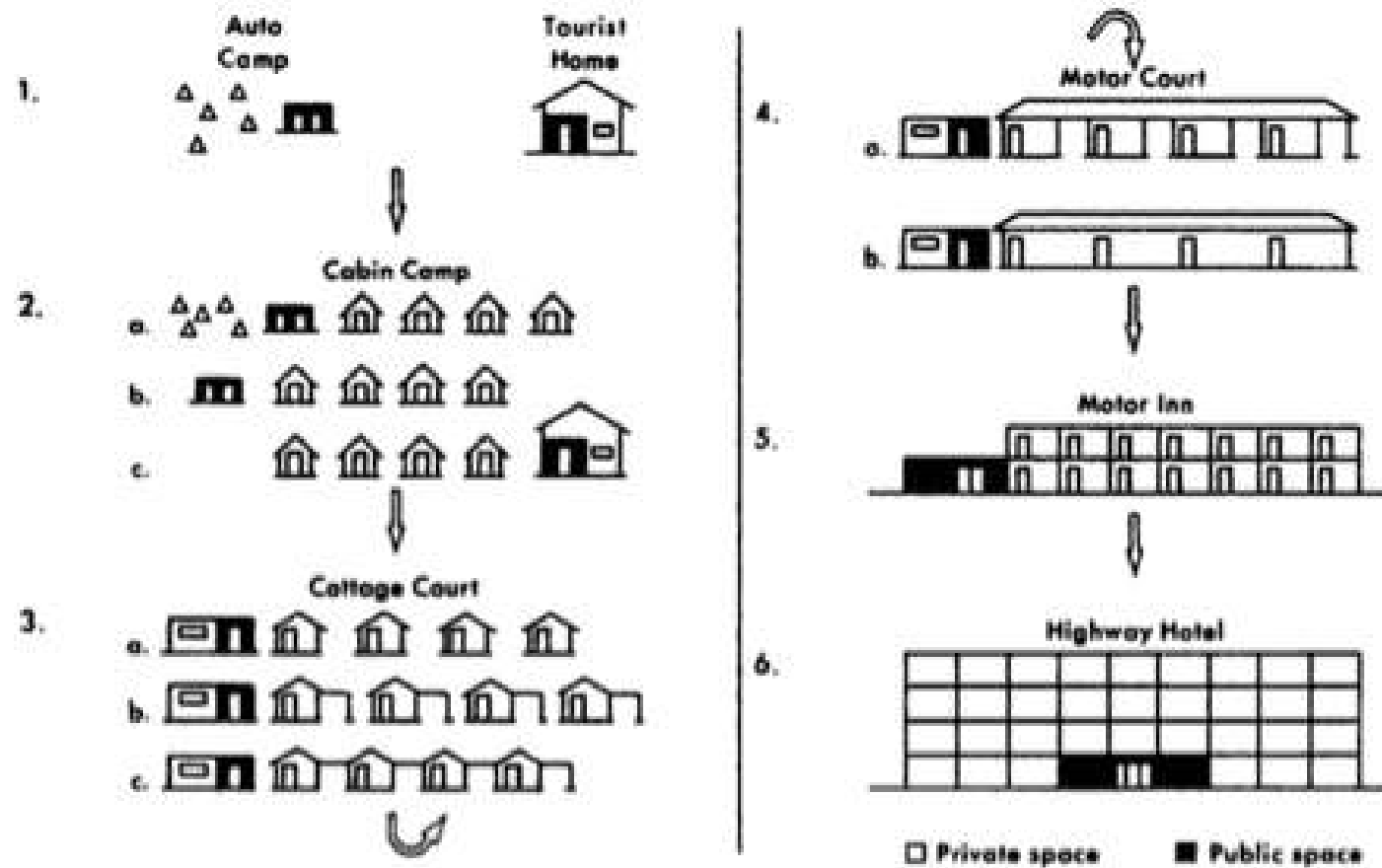


FIGURE 2.18 The evolution of the American motel as a building type.





# **PILGRIM HOUSE**

**RESTAURANT**

**IN THE  
HOST OF AMERICA MOTEL  
3245 RIVERS AVE.**

**OPEN 6 A.M. 'TIL 10:30 P.M.**

**SERVING:**

- **BREAKFAST ● SPECIAL DINNERS**
- **BUSINESS MENS LUNCHEON**

**COME-IN MEET OUR NEW MANAGER**

**MARY AMERSON**

**VISIT OUR**

**BURGUNDY LOUNGE**

**(UP STAIRS) OPEN 4 'TIL 12**